



# February '18 Newsletter

Celebrating 61 Years of Birding  
1957-2018

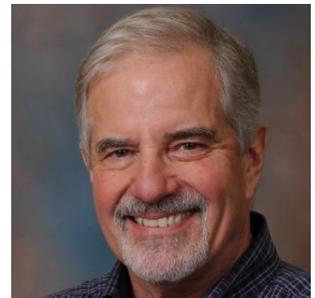
## NEXT MEETING

Monday, February 12th at 7PM  
Grandin Court Baptist Church  
2660 Brambleton Ave. Roanoke, VA 24015

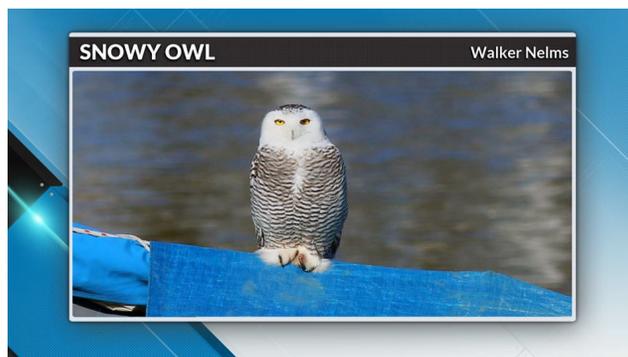
(Join fellow club members for dinner at 5:30PM at Brambleton Deli; 3655 Brambleton Ave.)

## ENCOUNTER WITH A SNOWY OWL

Due to winter weather our January meeting was canceled. Mr. Nelms has agreed to present his talk this month. Walker Nelms is a longtime Roanoker who enjoys nature, sailing and among other things is known as a talented photographer. In December, he spotted and photographed a Snowy Owl which was posted on the Channel 7 news. He will be sharing his photos of this amazing bird as well as other birds at our January 8th meeting.



Our speaker is currently working for Angels of Assisi helping them with publicity. He has also done Publicity and Public Relations for the American Red Cross, the Virginia Museum of Transportation in Roanoke and Feeding America. He is a past board member of Southwest Virginia Wildlife Center of Roanoke and currently helps with their publications. As a side note, his wife, Carol designed their first logo. For additional information about the Snowy Owl, please see the January newsletter.



## UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

(For any additional information please contact Linda Cory at 540-580-5214 or RVBC2015@outlook.com)

### **FEBRUARY 14th, WEDNESDAY at 9am - 2nd WED. BIRD WALK at GREENFIELD**

Join co-leaders: Barry Whitt (309-4353) and Kent Davis (355-6388) for a Valentine's Day bird walk on the Cherry Blossom Trail at Greenfield. We will walk around Greenfield Lake in search for waterfowl and songbirds. The walk will be mostly flat walk of about 2 miles. We will also cover the grassy area overlooking the lake or the trail down to the lower pond. Bring your spotting scopes! For those that want to stay afterwards, we can lunch at Ballast Point Brewery overlooking the lake. This trip will be repeated on March 14th. Directions: Exit at 150B on I-81 and follow signs to 220 North. Go about one mile and take a left on Commons PKY (formerly Wesley Rd) and then a right on Kingston Rd into the Botetourt Commons shopping center and park at Bojangles.

### **FEBRUARY 25th, SUNDAY at 8am – SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANT AND SUR-ROUNDS**

Meet leader Kent Davis (355-6388) and Linda Cory (580-5214) at the Greenway parking lot on Bennington St next to the bridge over the Roanoke River. After a short scan of the Roanoke River, we will carpool over to the Sewage Treatment Plant (STP). Entrance to the STP is by special permit and only on Sundays, and trip participants must all enter at the same time and stay together as a group. This site is one of the best spots for viewing shorebirds in the Roanoke Valley. The property includes impoundments, sludge ponds, mudflats, riparian habitat and woodlands. Besides shorebirds, we can expect to see resident hawks and possibly ravens and fish crows. The walking is mostly flat with a short steep trail. Sturdy waterproof boots are recommended as it could be muddy. If time permits, we will also look for birds at Mayflower Park and/or the end of Rutrough Road. Directions: Thirteenth Street SE changes names to Bennington St at the bridge over the Roanoke River which is in front of the STP. Look for the Greenway parking lot next to Brownlee St SE.

### **MARCH 10th, SATURDAY at 8am – LOCHER TRACT**

Join Bill Hunley (467-3477) at 8AM at Botetourt Commons for a special field trip to Locher Tract, located in the Jefferson National Forest. This is a managed wildlife habitat that contains woods, open fields, a beaver pond and good views of the James River. We can expect an excellent variety of birds with our target birds to include early migrant warblers, Wood Duck, Brown Creeper, Fox Sparrow and Hairy Woodpecker. Locher Tract is near Natural Bridge Station in Rockbridge County. There will be 2 miles of level walking, but wear sturdy, waterproof shoes. If time permits, we will then visit the Arcadia area and nearby Solitude Swamp. Directions: Exit at 150B on I-81 and follow signs to 220 North. Go about one mile and take a left on Commons PKY (formerly Wesley Rd) and then a right on Kingston Rd into the Botetourt Commons shopping center and park at Bojangles.

## SIGHTINGS

Bill Hunley— Golden Eagle at Greenfield

Tom Davis— Trumpeter Swans on the New River

Kathy and George Clemo— Brown-headed Nuthatches

Mary Lou Barritt, Kent Davis and Linda Cory— Rufous Hummingbird near Bent Mt.

Bob Epperson— White-winged Scoter at Willow Lake; a Golden Eagle near Concord and a Greater White-fronted Goose near Boonesboro

Barry Kinzie— Surf Scoter at Carvin's Cove

Mary Lou and Sid Barritt, Dick Grubb, Barry Kinzie and Kent Davis— White-winged Scoter on Greenfield Pond

Linda Cory was impressed by an Eastern Screech Owl calling in the late afternoon while the wind was howling and the thermometer read 2 degrees.

Joe Dupuis— Bald Eagles in the Poages Mill area

Loggerhead Shrikes are being reported in Pulaski and Bland.

A Ross's Goose has been reported at the Virginia Tech Hospital Pond



## CLUB NEWS

### **HOLIDAY/CHRISTMAS CARD BIRD COUNT**

As bird watchers, we all receive cards from family and friends with birds on them. You might even send out cards with our feathered friends on them, too. In the spirit of competition, count all of the birds that are on the cards that you receive during the 2017 holiday season. Bring your total number of birds counted on your received cards to the January 8th meeting. There will be a first and second place prize! You don't have to list species (how can we when card makers use artistic license), but just a total number. If you are unable to attend the January meeting, send your number total with a friend or email the total to [RVBC2015@outlook.com](mailto:RVBC2015@outlook.com).

## February 2-4, 2018 VSO Field Trip Outer Banks

Make plans to join us for the annual Virginia Society of Ornithology field trip to the Outer Banks. The weekend's leaders include Bill Akers and Jerry Via, as well as VSO field trip co-chairs Lee Adams and Meredith Bell. We always have great waterfowl, shorebirds and raptors, along with a wide assortment of land birds. Details are on the VSO website <http://www.virginiabirds.org/events/field-trip-announcements/20180202-outer-banks>.

Hotel Reservations must be made by January 8th to get the special VSO rate. This is a wonderful trip and a long, long time tradition for the Virginia Society of Ornithology. Our club is a chapter of the VSO and there are always some RVBC members on this favorite trip.

## ANNUAL RAPTOR COUNT

Spend a few hours driving away the winter blues on Saturday February 10, 2018. The annual Raptor Count is a great excuse to get out of the house and do some winter birding with your birding buddies!! No skill is required, just a little time and effort. Plan on a leisurely drive around your area, counting all the hawks you see. Points are awarded for each hawk, although this is not a serious competition. The winner gets bragging rights!! We compile the results from everyone's efforts and keep an eye

on trends in hawk populations. In the unlikely event of inclement weather, an alternate date of Sunday February 11 has been set. Contact Anne Tucker (540) 721-1573 if you have any questions. The tally sheet can be emailed to [billt3256@gmail.com](mailto:billt3256@gmail.com) or mailed to 3256 Lakewood Forest Rd. Moneta VA 24121.



## AUDUBON'S GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

The 21st annual GBBC will be held Friday, February 16, through Monday, February 19, 2018. Details are available at [birdcount.org](http://birdcount.org). The Great Backyard Bird Count is a free, fun, and easy event that engages bird watchers to create a real-time snapshot of bird populations. Participants are asked to count birds for a minimum of 15 minutes on at least one of the four days and report their sightings online at [birdcount.org](http://birdcount.org). Anyone can take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count, from beginning bird watchers to experts, and you can participate from your backyard, or anywhere in the world.

Each checklist submitted during the GBBC helps researchers at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society learn more about bird populations and how to protect them and the environment we share. Last year, more than 160,000 participants submitted their bird observations online, creating the largest instantaneous snapshot of global bird populations ever recorded.

## **New Year's Day Bird Lists – A Great Way to Start 2018**

As announced in the December newsletter and at club meetings, we were encouraged to start out our year by compiling our own New Year's Day list. This year we had 23 club members send in their New Year's bird list from the Roanoke area as well as New York, Florida, California, Maryland, North and South Carolina and Tennessee. 68 species in all were tallies with the following highlights.

This year, members reported all 3 Nuthatches . A Red-Headed woodpecker was seen by Donna Mateski. Alyce and Tim Quinn reported a Hermit Thrush and Raven. Dick Hendrix reported a Wild Turkey. Victoria Keenum reported a Red-breasted Nuthatch. Pam Ogden in California added plethora of shorebirds with Snowy Plover and a beautiful Avocet. Joan Ramsey in Florida reported 8 new species including White Ibis, White Egret, White Pelican, Anhinga and Fish Crows. Barry Kinzie in another part of Florida also had an impressive list adding 6 more, including Peregrine Falcon and male Painted Bunting . Bob and Sherry Miller observed an American Tree Sparrow. Mary Lou and Sid Barritt reported a nice array of Maryland birds including Juncos and Nuthatches. Lourdes Page saw 26 Wood Ducks together on Jekyll Island. Rita O'Brien reported a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker as did Patty Arrington who also added a Belted Kingfisher to our list. Other contributors, Linda Cory, Bob Epperson, Kent Davis, Kathy Clemo, Nancy Young, Pat Popper and Laurie and Scott Spangler added greatly to the list with our native species. Thank you to all that participated.

### **HIGHLAND COUNTY TRIP**

Fourteen birders enjoyed a warm but windy day in Highland, Alleghany and Bath counties. It was a full day packed with 51 species with a plethora of waterfowl and raptors. Highlights were Common Merganser, Redhead, Wigeon, Black Duck, Golden Eagle, Bald Eagle on a nest, Wilson's Snipe, several Kestrels, several ravens including a late day kettle, a bevy of Eastern Meadowlarks, Pine Siskin, Black-capped Chickadee and Belted Kingfisher.



### **WINTER WEATHER**

Please remember that our meetings can be cancelled in the winter time. Our meetings are automatically cancelled if Roanoke County or City schools are closed.

## BIRD OF THE MONTH - Blue Jay

When my California relatives were visiting, my aunt asked me what bird was perched on top of our roof. I get elected to answer these questions as “the birder”. We were viewing the bird in question from beneath and had a good view of the breast and neck. When I answered “Blue Jay” my aunt was skeptical - “Where’s the blue?” Unlike the Steller’s Jay found in California, our Blue Jay has a totally white to buffy breast with the crest, back, wings and tail sporting the blue that gives it its name. The rest of the name comes from its call which is “Jay!”.

The Blue Jay is known for its beauty as well as brains. They are in the family Corvidae which includes magpies, crows and ravens, also known for their intelligence. Jays are opportunistic omnivores and they are known to dominate a bird feeder. My husband, a non-birder, once asked me who those “mean birds” were at the feeder. Some of their “mean” activities also include preying on other birds’ nests and observing and then stealing other birds’ food that they have cached. They have been observed re-caching the stolen food. On the nicer side, the male jays (which look like the females) are known to help with nesting duties and are more monogamous than other species.

- Linda Cory

### Interesting facts:

*Some Blue Jays are known to migrate one year and stay north the next. Scientists have studied their migration patterns as unpredictable.*

*The Cornell Lab site states that “Their fondness for acorns is credited with helping spread oak trees after the last glacial period”.*

*Blue Jays are known to expertly imitate hawk calls which they use to their advantage. This tactic is used to make other birds scatter making the food source available for the Blue Jays.*

*The pigment in Blue Jay feathers is actually brown but reflects blue when scattering light refracts through their feathers. Blue Jays adapt to a variety of habitat from urban to forest edges and are found in every state east of the Rockies and into Canada.*



WINTER RAPTOR COUNT

February 10, 2018

Participants \_\_\_\_\_

Time Started \_\_\_\_\_ pleted Time Com- \_\_\_\_\_

Location \_\_\_\_\_

SPECIES                      POINTS      QUANTITY   NOTES                      TOTAL

Turkey Vulture	*1			
Black Vulture	*2			
Red-tailed Hawk	5			
American Kestrel	10			
Common Raven	10			
Eastern Screech Owl	**10			
Cooper's Hawk	20			
Sharp-shinned Hawk	20			
Great Horned Owl	30			
Red-shouldered Hawk	30			
Barred Owl	35			
Northern Harrier	40			
Bald Eagle	50			
Barn Owl	50			
Loggerhead Shrike	50			
Merlin	75			
Peregrine Falcon	75			
Rough-legged Hawk	75			
Short-eared Owl	75			
Golden Eagle	100			
Northern Goshawk	100			
Long-eared Owl	125			
Northern Saw-whet Owl	125			
Northern Shrike	150			
Unidentified Raptor	5			

POINT TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_

\* Maximum of 50 Points

\*\* Maximum of 100 Points

Be sure to keep your totals! There is a 10-point bonus for peak counts of these three species.

RULES: Teams must be at least 2 people. Teams may bird any area within a 100-mile radius of Woodpecker Ridge Nature Center. Birds must be seen or heard by at least 2 team members. Count period cannot exceed a total of 12 hrs.

Completed forms can be emailed to [billt3256@gmail.com](mailto:billt3256@gmail.com) or mailed to Anne Tucker

3256 Lakewood Forest Rd. Moneta VA 24121. Call Anne at 540-721-1573 with any questions.



Roanoke Valley Bird Club  
c/o Eleanor Dye  
PO Box 74  
Vinton, VA 24179



### 2018 Roanoke Valley Bird Club Membership Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Memberships expire August 31st.

Annual Dues	
Individual \$12	_____
Family \$20	_____
Student \$7	_____
Sustaining \$30	_____
Adopt a Bluebird \$15	_____
Additional Contribution	_____
Total Payment	_____
Make check payable to the Roanoke Valley Bird Club c/o Eleanor Dye Box 74 Vinton, VA 24179	